

RIVISTA MILITARE
MULTI LANGUAGES

2024

RIVISTA MILITARE





20 | THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

by Fabrizio Luperto

The film, based on Giles Foden's novel of the same name, traces the political and social history of Uganda during the regime of dictator Idi Amin Dada (Forest Whitaker) in the 1970s. "The Last King of Scotland" is a complex film that unfolds like a thriller, thanks in part to director Kevin Macdonald's way of shooting, which puts his experience as a documentary filmmaker to good use and stays well away from simple biographical description. A film that tells a glimpse of Africa in those years and the difficulty of understanding it with the Western "point of view."

22 | THEREMIN

by Pierfrancesco Sampaolo

In 1920, something strange happened to a Russian scientist (and cellist) while he was researching electromagnetic waves in the military: he accidentally invented the first (and only) musical instrument that needs no physical contact to play. The scientist in question is Lev Sergeevič Termen, known to most as Leon Theremin; the instrument, on the other hand, is the heterophone, or more commonly, the Theremin.

The instrument consisted (and consists) of a case with oscillators and two antennas, one vertical and one horizontal. It is certainly not an easy instrument to play, but the discovery was ingenious and left the whole world stunned.

44 | DISINFORMATION THREATENS DEMOCRACY

by Silvia Samorè

The Ukrainian conflict and the confrontation between the great powers have increased the spread of fake news, a scenario that emerged at the Vilnius Summit last July. Various are the bodies to guarantee information;

there is the Strategic Communication Task Force, and the Helsinki Center of Excellence against Hybrid Threats, wanted by the European Council. The EU presented the "Code of Conduct on Disinformation," a unicum of self-regulation, signed by Facebook, Google, Twitter and Mozilla, and by Microsoft and TikTok in 2020. Another virtuous case is the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP), with a vocabulary on disinformation dating back to 2022, a non-binding act for social media, unwitting witnesses to inaccurate narratives. The External Action Service monitors Kremlin news, with the VSDisinfo website. Fake news is covered by the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), thanks to a staff of Italians. The author focuses on artificial intelligence that can, on the one hand, counter objective information and, on the other hand, can move to protect it.

48 | THE ROAD TO WAR IN UKRAINE

by Nicola Cristadoro

The author, a tenured teacher of SIO at the School of Application and a prominent contributor to "Limes" magazine, traces a lucid and articulate path on the events that preceded the Russian Federation's Special Military Operation on Ukrainian territory. From the events of Euromaidan in 2014, to the "Little Green Men" in Crimea, to propaganda and fake news, to referendums in the disputed regions, to the involvement of militias and mercenaries in the Donbass, to "hybrid" attacks, the author provides us with a nimble and detailed overview to get a better idea of the path that led to the exacerbation of the already difficult situation in those Eastern European territories.

The author was hired by Military Review to develop this theme.

56

INFORMATION WARFARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

by Dario Citati

Theories and techniques of Soviet origin concerning military deception, and defined by the term maskirovka (“camouflage”) make up the operational scheme that Russia uses for its psychological warfare, with an application in a systematic way in the information field-particularly at the strategic level-to camouflage its aims and make them accepted, once realized.

A pattern that appears to have been applied, ever since the Crimean referendum in 2014, to continue throughout the conflict in Ukraine. Four steps: initially denying any involvement in an offensive action that Russia is accused of; shifting the focus of the narrative to the faults and provocations of Russia’s enemies; announcing Russia’s goodwill to cooperate in all fora and sit at the negotiating table; and claiming that Russia struck to defend itself against an external threat, not only to protect its own legitimate national interests but also in favor of a more equitable international order.

60

NEVER FORGET THE RAILROADS

by Mauro Bordo

The outbreak of a “symmetrical” conflict within European borders has highlighted the strategic value of rail transport in support of both military mobility and civilian initiatives, confirming its validity even in the context of traditional conflicts in modern operational scenarios.

From a tactical point of view, however, they are not reflected in the choices made in recent decades within the Alliance, where the military rail capability has not been adequately exploited. In particular, the lack of a choral vision has contributed significantly to the definition of the current situational picture, which is characterized by obvious shortcomings in terms of materials and adequately trained personnel.

With this in mind, the article aims to explore what role the rail component has really played for both sides in the conflict, comparing the findings with current NATO

policy in the field. The analysis is limited to the tactical level, given that in the strategic/operational one, the Alliance has long since launched initiatives to revitalize military mobility, recognizing among other things the importance of rail transport in support of military campaigns.

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FROM THE LEVANT TO THE WEST INDIES

by Cristiano Barbera

This article focuses on the historical figure of Alonso de Guillén Contreras, an infantry captain employed in the Armada Española who lived between the late 16th and the first half of the 17th century. The events, handed down through an autobiographical manuscript drafted by de Contreras himself and preserved at the Biblioteca Nacional de España, hinge fully within the geopolitical and military events that directly involved the Spanish Empire at the height of the Siglo de Oro. An empire spread over no less than three continents, constantly subjected to the scourge of warfare, both by land and sea, which ensured its supremacy while threatening its stability. These are conflicts in Europe, the Mediterranean and the New World, fought on the front lines by Captain de Contreras himself and reported within the pages of his autobiography.





30 | HOW CHECHEN VOLUNTEERS CHALLENGE THE RUSSIANS IN UKRAINE

by Pierluigi Bussi

Who are the Chechens, and why are they fighting alongside the Ukrainian army? Scattered across Ukrainian territory, these volunteer military units have become some of the most feared by Moscow's armed forces. For Chechen fighters, their participation in this conflict is part of a larger mission to reclaim the legitimacy of their people and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which remains unrecognized by any government. Their fight in Ukraine seeks to redress nearly two centuries of Russian oppression, from Stalin's 1940s deportations to the destruction of Grozny under Boris Yeltsin, and now the authoritarian rule of Ramzan Kadyrov, a staunch ally of Vladimir Putin.

38 | PIRATES OF THE RED SEA

by Giampaolo Cadalanu

In August, the Houthis yielded to environmental protection concerns, halting their attack on the oil tanker Sounion, which was carrying 150,000 tonnes of oil through the Red Sea, to allow rescue teams to prevent a crude oil spill and avert environmental disaster. This action, seen by some as a gesture toward dialogue, did not, however, signal an end to their attacks in the Red Sea. Instead, it underscored the group's commitment to piracy as a political strategy. The Shiite group's objective is not financial gain but political pressure on countries allied with Israel, aiming to influence them to end the war in Gaza. Three factors enhance the effectiveness of this neo-pirate strategy. First, the Houthis are meticulous in their communication efforts. Second, they lack a fixed base or high-value targets vulnerable to Western military strikes. Third, they are acutely aware that Western military assets are too powerful to engage directly, making piracy a strategically advantageous tactic.

42 | STEEL IN EUROPE

by Pierluigi Bussi

The steel industry is currently facing significant challenges across Europe, with production levels influenced by developments in the Asian market. The automotive sector is experiencing the most severe impacts, though the defence sector is also feeling the strain. Notably, no European-owned companies appear among the world's top ten steel producers; the Luxembourg-based holding Arcelor Mittal, the second largest globally, is owned by Indian billionaire Lakshmi Mittal.

Despite this decline in a historically dominant industry, prospects for cleaner steel offer hope for the future. In the medium term, the green steel sector is expected to expand significantly, driven primarily by green hydrogen produced from renewable sources, which will play a central role in the industry's decarbonisation.

46 | WE ARE NOT ALL THE SAME

by Guido Barbujani

Why are we not all the same? Tall or short, slender or stout, with varied skin, eye, and hair colours, our differences have sparked debate for centuries. Today, we understand that these distinctions are due to small changes in our DNA. Modern DNA studies offer a remarkable lens for exploring who we are and how we evolved.

Evolutionary scientists propose that natural selection shaped basic yet effective cognitive mechanisms allowing us to quickly judge strangers as friends or foes. However, this can lead to discrimination. Although these mechanisms can protect us from unexpected threats, they often result in prejudgments rather than understanding. Grouping people by race may seem to simplify our lives, but it actually complicates our understanding of one another.

50

QUANTUM BIT

by Giuliana Siddi Moreau

Quantum technologies are cutting-edge tools with considerable potential for military applications. These technologies rely on qubits, short for 'quantum bits', the fundamental two-level units in quantum computing, much as bits serve classical computing. Quantum systems have unique properties that make them special.

58

CAIVANO ANSWERS THE ARMY'S CALL

by Pierluigi Bussi

Many initiatives aim to bring a new spirit to neighbourhoods often marginalised in the greater Naples area. One such effort took place in Caivano, where the "Esercito & Sport in Piazza" event was held on 28 September to promote values of legality, safety, and inclusion and to encourage young people's participation in sports. Organised by the Italian Army and now in its second year, the event took place in Caivano's market area. This initiative focused on integrating and revitalising the area, offering its residents a renewed sense of community and opportunities for social gathering. The event attracted many young high school students who participated in a variety of sports and social activities. Attendees included the Chief of the Army General Staff, LtGen Carmine Masiello, and the Undersecretary of State for Defence, Senator Isabella Rauti.

62

LIGABUE AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE MIND

by Paola Pucci

In the autumn of 2024, the genius Antonio Ligabue returns to Rome for an unprecedented exhibition featuring around 70 of his works.

This artist's encounter with the Eternal City takes place in the symbolic setting of the Museo Storico della Fanteria, initiated by Difesa Servizi, which promoted the exhibition with the patronage of the Lazio Region and Roma Capitale and in collaboration with Navigare s.r.l., coinciding with the approach of the 60th anniversary of Ligabue's death in 1965.

Inaugurated on 28 September, the exhibition will run until 12 January 2025.





38 | ADAPTATION IS OUR STRENGTH

by Guglielmo Luigi Miglietta

The 2024 Steadfast Defender exercise marked a significant milestone in NATO's deterrence and defence strategy by displaying the Alliance's Command and Control Structure and its units' capability to conduct complex, multi-domain operations over an extended period. The exercise also demonstrated the transatlantic solid bond that continues to support NATO. For personnel at Allied Joint Force Command in Brunssum, participating in Steadfast Defender 2024 was a valuable opportunity to demonstrate their multi-domain operations capabilities.

46 | FENTANYL, ALARM IN ITALY TOO

by Pierluigi Bussi

Fentanyl, known as the 'zombie drug' because it can quickly turn people into the 'living dead', is used in oncology for pain relief. This synthetic drug, which is up to a hundred times more potent than morphine and fifty times stronger than heroin, has become a major concern in Italy. Law enforcement and health authorities are reporting an exponential increase in cases. Why is this drug so dangerous? How does it affect our bodies? The peculiarity of this substance is its very rapid effect; it creates a strong sense of well-being and makes all physical pain disappear, but it also causes a relaxation of the lungs and the consequent reduction of the amount of oxygen to the brain, which leads to unconsciousness and death. Generation Z, the most fragile generation when it comes to new synthetic drugs, is unknowingly suffering from the phenomenon. In March, the government presented a National Plan in cooperation with the police and the Ministry of Health to intercept and prevent the illegal distribution of opioids.

The problem is widespread and can have severe consequences for all levels of society.

50 | WARGAMING YES, BUT ANALOGUE

by Giancarlo Fambrini

The US Marines Corps Warfighting Laboratory has recently developed a wargaming system called the Operational Wargaming System. NATO Commands have taken an interest in this system, and the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), stationed in the UK, has conducted multiple rounds of experimentation on it. The results were positive, and the ARRC now uses it for their operational planning, especially for current scenarios.

54 | THE FUTURE OF TACTICS WILL BE DEFINED

by Alessandro Ludovico Veltri

From the invention of gunpowder to the atomic bomb to the latest 5G communication technologies, great military victories have been mainly attributed to scientific and technological advancements.

Nowadays, software is the new driving force behind this advantage. It can break down adversary complexity by enhancing its own capabilities, transforming them into a 'mosaic' weapon that combines data, procedures, communication and weapon systems to produce a greater effect. Thanks to recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms, the software can make complex decisions that adapt automatically to the context and the intended effects, revolutionising tactics and creating new dimensions on the battlefield.

66 | MILITARY MADE IN ITALY

by Andrea Cionci

The phrase "Made in Italy" is widely known for its association with quality and excellence in Italian products. This reputation extends to the military world,

where several Italian inventions, from the simplest to the most complex, have become characteristic of the Italian Army and have even been exported and copied worldwide.

These Italian military inventions include the scaldarancio, a field stove used for heating rations, the mountain camouflage invented by Ugo Cerletti, the Bonagente tracked treads, and the first machine gun in history, the Fiat Mod. 105 'Villar Perosa'. Additionally, one of the world's most successful Italian artillery pieces is the 105/14 howitzer from 1957, designed by Colonel Salvatore Fuscaldi., or ration warmer, as it is called, a very simple field stove, to the mountain camouflage invented by Ugo Cerletti, to the Bonagente tracked treads and the first machine gun in history, the Fiat Mod. 105 'Villar Perosa'. Among the world's most successful Italian artillery pieces is the 105/14 howitzer from 1957, designed by Colonel Salvatore Fuscaldi.

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WHEN MUSIC IS MADE OF 'DOORS'

by Pierfrancesco Sampaolo

How much can one's surroundings and life experiences influence their art? Ray Manzarek, the legendary keyboardist of 'The Doors', had a military background that, for better or for worse, not only helped shape his artistic genius but also contributed to his hypnotic style.

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EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED

by Fabrizio Luperto

'Everything Is Illuminated' is a film by US director Liev Schreiber and was released in 2005. The film was adapted from Jonathan Safran Foer's autobiographical novel of the same title. It follows the story of a young man named Jonathan, played by Elijah Wood. Jonathan travels from the United States to Ukraine to uncover the memories of his Jewish grandfather, who escaped from Nazi persecution and fled to the New World.





22 | A HELL OF CONCRETE

by Giampaolo Cadalanu

The evolution of military scenarios has resulted in fewer 'traditional' wars between well-defined and recognised state entities and more 'asymmetrical' conflicts between a state entity and a non-conventional enemy, therefore unrelated to a proper state.

The author discusses how contemporary warfare has changed. Nowadays, wars are mainly fought in built-up areas rather than open fields, as in the past, which allowed traditional armies to carry out their manoeuvres. Consequently, tactics, weaponry and training must be adapted to suit the urban environment.

26 | FROM THE WAGNER TO THE AFRICA CORPS

by Cosimo Ceccarelli

The Russian Federation has recently deployed a new force in Africa known as the Africa Corps. This move is part of the Kremlin's plan to extend its influence on the continent by offering political, military, and economic support to the Sahel military juntas, which took power through coups between 2020 and 2023. Burkina Faso has taken the lead by signing a military cooperation agreement allowing the Africa Corps to be stationed in the country. With the gradual withdrawal of French forces from the Sahel, Russia has strategically and informally increased its presence in the region since 2018 through the military company Wagner. Wagner has been involved in protecting military regimes, arms trafficking, and exploiting mineral resources. However, a crisis emerged within the private company with the death of Wagner's leader and creator, Prygozhin, in August 2023. This led Moscow to take the initiative by deploying the Africa Corps, framed as a regular force under the direct command of the Russian Ministry of Defence. Although preliminary analyses have considered the Africa Corps as simply a 'rebranding' of Wagner, the change is actually significant, indicating a more substantial Russian presence in Africa with increased resources to expand and support military juntas with an anti-Western agenda.

30 | WHY THE RED SEA?

by Pierluigi Bussi

The Red Sea crisis is threatening global economic stability. Attacks by Houthi rebels are significantly impacting global supply chains, leading major shipping companies to seek alternative routes over much longer distances. What will be the consequences of these developments, and why does this waterway play a vital role in international trade? Since the attacks began, the number of containers usually crossing the Red Sea has fallen by more than half, and journey times have extended by one or even two weeks. The redirection of shipping via the Cape of Good Hope not only diversifies the maritime route but also raises security concerns, resulting in delays and higher costs. In response to the increasing Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea, the European Union has approved the military naval operation Aspid-ees, with Italy assuming command of the forces.

34 | THE CASE OF NAGORNO KARABAKH

by Dario Citati

As of 1 January 2024, the Republic of Artsakh, a state located in the Caucasian region of Nagorno Karabakh, disputed between Armenia and Azerbaijan, officially ceased to exist. In a lightning offensive launched on 19 September 2023, Azerbaijan attacked the capital, Stepanakert, causing the local Armenian population to flee to Armenia. Azerbaijan's conquest of Nagorno Karabakh redraws the geopolitical balance in the South Caucasus and constitutes a case study of interest in military doctrine.

46 | WE CANNOT TURN OUR BACKS ON IT

by Livia Iervolino

The Hikikomori syndrome is a disorder and pathology that has been developing in the world in recent decades and affects large sections of society, primarily middle and upper-middle-class young people.

The resulting isolation can lead to a chronic pathological state, even to depression, with even fatal consequences (self-harm, suicide). The problem is snowballing in Italy, and given its prevalence, it is essential to talk about it as much as possible to prevent and recognise it since no one (as a parent or child) is safe from it. Marco Crepaldi, the president of the 'Hikikomori Italia' Association, was interviewed to explore this topic in more detail. Marco Crepaldi is a psychologist, trainer, essayist, scientific populariser, and the founding president of the national association 'Hikikomori Italia'. Since 2017, the association has been dealing with chronic voluntary social isolation among young people. He is the author of the book 'Hikikomori—Young People Who Don't Leave Home' (Alpes, 2019).

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BRINGS THE BEATLES TOGETHER

by Pierfrancesco Sampaolo

It is a fact that artificial intelligence is now spreading like wildfire in every corner of our lives, from the military to the civil world. However, who would have thought it could even break the time barrier and finish a Beatles song written almost 60 years ago by the late John Lennon? Yes, this is the story of the song 'Now And Then', written in 1970 by the Fab Four's historic frontman, who was killed by a fan in New York in 1980.

62

DON MINZONI

by Giuseppe Cacciaguerra

'Yesterday at 10.30 p.m., two hitherto unknown Fascists viciously attacked the local archpriest, Giovanni Minzoni, with violent blows (...) serious beatings caused the death of the archpriest (...) the motive for the crime was slight political disagreements (...) it is feared public order may be disturbed due to the murdered man's notoriety. Adequate reinforcement requested'. These were the words of the telegram from the Royal Carabinieri police station in Argenta, signed by Lieutenant Borla Mr Costantino, sent on 24 August at 10.20 a.m. That is the way Don Minzoni died from a brutal beating at the age of 38. He was an inconvenient priest, too cumbersome.





22 | THE NIGHTMARE OF URBAN COMBAT

by Nicola Cristadoro

"Why Mariupol?" The answer is that the town is strategically important due to its access to the Azov Sea. So what enabled the Ukrainians to hold out in Mariupol for over two months despite being outnumbered and totally cut off from supplies? The occupation of Mariupol was challenging for the Russian Armed Forces: the army had not stormed such large cities since the Battle of Grozny during the First Chechen War. Beyond the tragedy they experienced, Cristadoro analyses the lessons learned emerging from the testimonies of Russian soldiers who were veterans of that battle. On 10 April 2022, Russian troops announced they had reached the Azovstal plant, a large metallurgical complex structured with an intricate system of underground shelters and communication routes. The underground facilities allowed the Ukrainian forces to conduct surprise attacks against surface units and provided good protection from air and artillery assaults. The siege of Azovstal ended on 20 May with the surrender of all Ukrainian military personnel. In the following days, some 2,500 soldiers surrendered to the Russians.

26 | YET ANOTHER THREAT TO TANKS

by Andrea Russo

The conflict in Ukraine provided real-world testing for many platforms and weapon systems designed during the last decades of the previous century. However, due to the asymmetric nature of the wars fought since the 1990s, these systems have not been able to fully demonstrate their potential as they have been employed in counter-insurgency missions. Among the various assets that have stood out are the Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs), especially those of Western production, made available to the Ukrainian Armed Forces by NATO countries. Some have displayed amazing capabilities, posing severe challenges to Russian tanks.

30 | ESCAPED FROM HELL

by Pierluigi Bussi

Wali Mohammad Atai is a young Afghan recruited in a kamikaze training centre who eventually said no to the Taliban. Having fled Afghanistan to avoid beheading, after a harrowing three-year journey, he arrived in Italy by clinging to a truck from Greece. In Italy, he found a new homeland. After being granted refugee status, he successfully earned degrees in Language Mediation Sciences and Political Science from the University of Pavia. In an interview with Rivista Militare, Atai tells us his story of escaping religious fundamentalism and how an immigrant can find such a welcome in Italy under certain conditions. He lights a glimmer of hope for Afghan women and is confident that the new progressive wing of the Islamic Emirate can modernise Afghanistan. The young Afghan has become an example for many refugees to follow. He says, 'Italy is a country that, unlike other European states, has always helped without looking at skin colour, origin or religion. All my dreams have come true here; the people have given me so much hope and so many tools to get up, wipe my tears and build the future I wanted.'

34 | THE BANALITY OF EVIL AND A MAN

by Niccolò Bendini

SS Obergruppenführer Friedrich August Jeckeln was primarily responsible for some of the worst pogroms in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe between 1941 and 1944.

As senior commander of the SS and police (Höhere SS und Polizeiführer, HSSPF), he carried out terrible carnage in southern Russia in the Reich Commissariat in Ukraine, based in Kyiv. He later also became commander of the Reichskommissariat Ostland in Riga, Latvia, on 30 October 1941, and here, too, he left a trail of blood and pain. Moreover, from 22 February 1944, Jeckeln was also given the same post for Northern Russia, increasing his power until Jan-

uary 1945. Once captured by the Soviets, before being executed, he confessed to having caused the deaths of between 190,500 and 253,500 people, emphasising, however, that he was unable to give precise figures.

60 | I HAVE NOTHING TO WEAR

by Livia Iervolino

The article is about Fast Fashion, a style of clothing that emerged in the 1980s and gained popularity in the 2000s when textile companies started to produce 52 collections per year, as opposed to the traditional two collections for spring/summer and autumn/winter. The environmental and social damage is devastating. About 500 million clothes, totalling 160 thousand tonnes of textile waste, are produced in Italy alone. In Europe, 12.6 million tonnes of textile waste is generated yearly, of which only 22% is collected for reuse or recycling (European Commission data). According to the United Nations, the textile industry consumes large quantities of water and is the second most polluting after the oil industry. It takes 7,500 litres of water to make one pair of jeans, equivalent to what a person drinks on average over seven years. Each year, the fashion industry uses 93 billion cubic metres of water, which would be enough to meet the needs of five million people. In the EU, approximately 5 million tonnes of clothes and shoes are thrown away (about 12 kilos per person), and 80% of these end up in incinerators and landfills in the South of the world. Furthermore, 25% of the clothes produced remain unsold, and less than 1% of old clothes are used to make new ones. These statistics highlight the reality of disposable fashion's impact, which is not in line with the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

64 | PROPAGANDA'S BOTTLE

by Pierfrancesco Sampaolo

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Nazi propaganda machine adopted a newly developed microphone called the Neumann CMV-3, which was patented in 1928. This microphone, nicknamed 'Hitler's bottle', contributed to the success of Hitler's obscure propaganda. It was used to amplify the vocal talents of the Nazi leader, despite itself.

78 | THE MILITARY MAN WHO FREED THE SLAVES

by Niccolò Lucarelli

This article is a tribute to Romolo Gessi, who was a cosmopolitan utopian, explorer, and remarkable soldier. He served in Crimea with the British army and later joined the Cacciatori delle Alpi, participating in the Second Italian War of Independence. In the 1870s, Gessi travelled to Sudan, exploring the southern Nile basin and fighting against slavery. The article details his exploits, from his European experiences to his time in Africa, highlighting his friendship with General Gordon and his commitment to the cause of freedom.





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Who are the Chechens, and why are they fighting alongside the Ukrainian army? Scattered across Ukrainian territory, these volunteer military units have become some of the most feared by Moscow's armed forces. For Chechen fighters, their participation in this conflict is part of a larger mission to reclaim the legitimacy of their people and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, which remains unrecognized by any government. Their fight in Ukraine seeks to redress nearly two centuries of Russian oppression, from Stalin's 1940s deportations to the destruction of Grozny under Boris Yeltsin, and now the authoritarian rule of Ramzan Kadyrov, a staunch ally of Vladimir Putin.

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